Independent Reading Post: 3/Semester: 1

The Alchemist

By: Paulo Coelho

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In this section of the book, the protagonist Santiago grows even further. Santiago works for the crystal merchant, to earn money. Since his money was stolen, Santiago found one way to make money. The merchant was very kind to Santiago to allow him to work in the shop. The merchant was a little hesitant to hire Santiago, but Santiago made him a lot of money. “The boy’s very presence in the shop was an omen, and, as time passed and money was pouring into the cash drawer, he had no regrets about having hired the boy,” (Coelho 52-53). Santiago came up with many new ideas to bring customers for the merchant. When Santiago found out that the merchant wanted to complete the Five Pillars of Islam by traveling to Mecca. This inspired Santiago, so made it his goal to attract more people to bring more money to the shop, which would also give him a higher commission. That way, he could accomplish his personal legend, and help the merchant accomplish his. Santiago finally made enough money, and made the decision to leave the shop. Although the merchant was really upset about his best worker leaving, he gave Santiago his blessing, and allowed Santiago to venture out to search for his treasure. Santiago then went to a caravan “center” and met an Englishman sitting on a bench. Santiago found out that the Englishman wanted to become an alchemist. The two talk in the caravan about each other’s personal legends. They find out that both of them have the same two stones (Urim and Thummim). Santiago reads some of the Englishman’s books on alchemy, learning a lot of new things. Santiago also improves upon his way of thinking because the Englishman’s philosophies. They learn of a war that is going on in the desert, and seek refuge in an oasis, because the rules of war forbade fighting in the oases. The Englishman meets an alchemist, but the alchemist of the oasis wouldn’t talk to him. Santiago falls in love with a girl. They met at a well, but talked a little bit each day. The girl then tells Santiago that he must come back for her, and that she loves him. “I too will be one of those women who wait,” (Coelho 98).

So far, this is my favorite part of the book. I really like the way that Santiago wants to help the merchant. He came up with good marketing ideas that brought business to the crystal shop. Santiago wanted to help the merchant travel to Mecca. Now a days, people don’t think like that. Everyone is concerned about himself or herself that they forget about others. This section of the book emphasized the “Language of the World,” which isn’t the language from human to human, but the language that flows between people from the world. These lyrical words from Coelho really made me think about communication between people. When talking to someone else, humans focus on the words coming out of the other person’s mouth. However, if you try thinking about why they are saying something, rather on what they are saying, the conversation might be more worth while. This philosophical entity really made me think. That is one theme among the entire book. I am always thinking about something! Coelho is a great writer, and I love the way that he connects character development with reader thought. *The Alchemist* is well crafted.

So far, this section of the book answers the course essential question the best. There are many human characteristics that span time and culture, and are demonstrated perfectly in this section of reading. The first characteristic spanning time and culture would be the need to learn more, the thirst for knowledge. Santiago met a soon to be alchemist who was carrying many books with him. Santiago started to read these books about science and the world and it really opened his eyes. It proves that moving through time, learning will never be forgotten. Why? Because you can never know everything, and learning more keeps your mind flowing with ideas. Another human characteristic demonstrated in this section would be perseverance. Santiago thought about giving up. He was ready to, until he realized that he was a sheepherder. He had nothing to lose to venture out into the desert because he has a profession that he can return to, isn’t in high demand, and is a pretty simple one too. “… And it’s in the desert that I have to search for my treasure. If I don’t find it, I can always go home,” (Coelho 65).

This section helped the reader to understand human nature. Obviously psychological reasoning is evident among all human beings, whether the process is simple for complex. However, as mentioned in a prior journal, Santiago continues to build upon his way of reasoning. Santiago met a stranger and automatically connected with him using the “language of the world.” It is funny how Santiago is so young, and so brave. Santiago’s spiritual ways are also complex, in which he deduces happenings in the world, and connects to religion, whatever it may be. He really tries to understand the heartbeat of the Earth. Meaning, Santiago wants to know why and how, but also staying within the boundaries of his religion.

Santiago and his relationship with the Englishman/future alchemist provide an outline for understanding human roles and behavior. Since Santiago met the Englishman, Santiago seems to be more comfortable with society. He talks more, opens up more, and even makes more connections with the world. Santiago and the Englishman conversed over a king who talked about stones and legends and the whole shebang. Well, wouldn’t you know that they were talking about the same person? It really is a small world. Anyway, the two bonded, to almost a father-son bond, but not quite. The two have a lot in common, and it’s good to see Santiago opening up. The two also study basic alchemy together to get to know each while riding in the caravan.

Understanding human ideals were emphasized quite heavily in this section. We already knew about Santiago’s personal legend (finding the treasure) but we also learn about the Englishman’s personal legend, which is to find “The Philosopher’s Stone.” With this being said, both of the characters wish to accomplish something, which helps us understand human ideals. It makes sense that when humans accomplish something, they feel better about themselves. This act alone is one of the main ideals that humans acquire and or act on. This self-achievement was a major theme in this section of the book. While it may seem a little selfish, it is perfectly human, hence the human ideal.